VOLUME 18, NUMBER 3 MARCH 2008

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A MESSAGE FROM DRU

March has arrived here in Texas. How can I tell? I snowed last Tuesday. It was 70° on Wednesday. It snowed Thursday night and today (Friday), it'll be close to 60°. Ya gotta love it!

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Sorry for the delay in getting this issue out to y'all. It's been kind of tumult here. For those of you who have been following my ongoing medical saga here's where we now stand:

After all the variety of testing that my GI doctor has subjected me to, it appears that I will need to undergo a **partial colectomy** within the next week or three. Depending on the severity of what they find, they may also have to do a **colostomy** (with it's additional surgeries). According to what I'm being told, I'll need 3-5 days post-op in the hospital. Then 6-8 weeks of recoup time at home.

And I thought 2008 was going to be dull and boring after all the excitement of 2007!

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Mark you calendars! Wednesday, June 25th, 7:30 pm., **Pocket Sandwich Theater**, located at 5400 E. Mockingbird, just east of Central Expressway. My band, LoveSong, will be performing as part of the **Lu Mitchell & Catch 23** show. This'll probably be my 'return-to-working-gig' after my upcoming surgery(s).

Food and beverage service is available before all shows. **Reservations are strongly recommended**. Call (214) 821-1860. Lu has sold out her last 2 performances at PST, so if you want to see us (and Lu, too) don't delay! Make reservations today!

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I guess I'll have to say this, AGAIN - Please try to get me first, and foremost, on the office phone - that's the 972-783-9787 number. If I'm not there, LEAVE A MESSAGE! If, after that, you still need to speak with me immediately, THEN call me on the cell phone. If you call on the cell, there's no guarantee that 1)I'll have it turned on; 2) I'll hear it ringing over the music from the car stereo; 3) I haven't left the darned thing sitting on my desk (again! <sigh>).

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For Sale!

eMac - all-in-one 17" CRT display, 1.25GHz G4 processor, 1GB RAM (?), 80 GB Hard drive, SuperDrive, keyboard, mouse. Only $299

G4 Tower - 450 MHz processor, 512 K RAM, 80 GB Hard drive, 17" display. Only $275

Musical keyboards - **ROLAND e-200**
This 61-key touch sensitive keyboard is an entry-level arranger keyboard. With high-quality sounds and styles, a powerful onboard sound system, and updateable Flash memory (via USB), this model should prove popular with entry-level music hobbyists who are looking for high-quality sounds and musical expandability in a portable keyboard
More info **here** - List for $1195. Yours for $300!

PAGE 2 - FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Speed Up Your Mac

Despite your best efforts, your Mac is running a bit slow. Hard disk space is filling up fast and applications are getting sluggish. Don't worry too much, it happens to everyone.

While there is no definitive cure-all for making your machine as good (and as fast) as day one, there are some basic things you can do that might help reclaim disk space, remove some clutter and generally speed up your Mac.

Take Stock of Your Hardware

Before you get started, keep in mind that none of these tips will change your aging G4 iMac into an Intel Quad-core speed machine. One of the best ways to speed up any aging computer is upgrade the hardware, so invest in a larger hard drive or more RAM if you want to make an old machine feel younger and more agile.

In the past, the case design of many Macs made it very complicated to upgrade the hard drive. More recent models are much easier to upgrade, especially iMacs and laptops. On some machines, such as the Mac Mini, adding memory or a new hard drive amounts to performing the equivalent of open-heart surgery. Best to have a pro do it. For most new Apple computers, you should be able to add more RAM or a hard drive without too much trouble.

Consult your user manual or a trusted supplier to make sure you're buying the right parts for the job. Most web shops have a browser-based tool for determining the RAM modules and hard drives that will work with your machine.

Another essential step before we get down to specifics is to run Software Update and make sure that you have the latest version of OS X and other Apple-supplied applications installed.

Recover Hard Disk space

When your hard drive gets too full drive (and by full, we mean past the 90% mark) it can slow down your Mac considerably. But don't start deleting your precious family photo albums -- here are a few things you may not know about that eat up space on your Mac drive.

1. Take a hard look at your applications folder. Do you really need all those shareware apps you aren't using? If not, get rid of them and free up a little space.
2. Delete unused language packs. You probably aren't using the Farsi language localizations on your machine. Even if you are, then you can probably still get rid of French or German. Check out the freeware app Monolingual which makes getting rid of unused language files a snap.
3. Know what you're storing. Download Where's The Free Space, which will give you a nice graphical overview of what is using space on your drive. If it is indeed those precious family photos, consider moving them off to a USB or Firewire external drive. Or burn them to DVDs.

Speed Up Slow Applications

When most people complain about their Mac being slow, they're usually referring to the applications running on their Mac. Here are a few common culprits.

- **Safari** -- Safari is fast and lightweight, but it can get bogged down if your browsing history is excessively large or if Safari is storing a ton of Autofill entries. One easy way to reset nearly everything at once is to select Safari > Reset Safari in the application menu, which will clear all your caches.
- **Dashboard** -- Dashboard widgets are handy tools, but they eat up RAM -- sometimes even when you aren't using them. This leaves less RAM available for the applications you actually are using. Head into your Applications Folder, select the Utilities Folder and look for Activity Monitor. Activity monitor is a great way to see what applications are using the most memory. If you see a lot of Dashboard widgets high up on the list, consider disabling them.
- **Firefox** -- If you're using versions 2.x or 1.x of Mozilla Firefox, you've probably noticed that the browser tends to take it's sweet time after it's been running for a while. Try uninstalling any unnecessary extensions. Reducing the add-ons you're running to about 3 or 4 will speed up most installations. If that fails, consider switching to the latest beta of Firefox 3, which is showing substantial speed improvements over its predecessors. It's pretty stable, but Firefox 3 is still pre-release, so consider yourself warned.
- **Universal binaries** -- If you're using an Intel Mac, make sure that all your applications are universal binaries. Older software compiled to run on PowerPC machines will be noticeably slower on Intel machines. If there's an upgrade available, download it and run it instead.

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iTunes Now Number Two Music Retailer in the US

iTunes Customers Top 50 Million

Apple announced that iTunes is now the number two music retailer in the US, behind only Wal-Mart, based on the latest data from the NPD Group*. Apple also announced that there are now over 50 million iTunes Store customers. iTunes has sold over four billion songs, with an incredible 20 million songs sold on Christmas Day 2007 alone, and offers the world's largest music catalog of over six million songs from all of the major and thousands of independent labels.

"We'd like to thank the over 50 million music lovers who have helped the iTunes Store reach this incredible milestone," said Eddy Cue, Apple's vice president of iTunes. "We continue to add great new features like iTunes Movie Rentals to give our customers even more reason to love iTunes."

Last month, Apple launched iTunes Movie Rentals featuring movies from all of the major movie studios including 20th Century Fox, The Walt Disney Studios, Warner Bros., Paramount, Universal Studios Home Entertainment, Sony Pictures Entertainment, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM), Lionsgate and New Line Cinema. Users can rent movies and watch them on their PCs or Macs, all current generation iPods**, iPhone and on a widescreen TV with Apple TV. iTunes Movie Rentals will offer over 1,000 titles by the end of this month, including over 100 titles in stunning high definition video with 5.1 Dolby Digital surround sound which users can rent directly from their widescreen TV using Apple TV.

iTunes 7.6 is available as a free download at www.itunes.com. iTunes Movie Rentals are available in the US only and are $2.99 (US) for library titles and $3.99 (US) for new releases, and high definition versions are priced just one dollar more with library titles at $3.99 (US) and new releases at $4.99 (US). Movie rentals from the iTunes Store for Mac® or Windows require iTunes 7.6. iTunes Movie Rentals require a valid credit card with a billing address in the country of purchase.

*Based on data from market research firm the NPD Group's MusicWatch survey that captures consumer reported past week unit purchases and counts one CD representing 12 tracks, excluding wireless transactions. The iTunes Music Store became the second-largest music retailer in the US after Wal-Mart, based on the amount of music sold during 2007.

**Movie rentals work on iPod classic, iPod nano with video and iPod touch.

iPod shuffle Now Just $49

New 2GB Model Priced at $69

Apple announced that its iPod shuffle, the world's most wearable music player, is now even more affordably priced at $49 and that it is introducing a new 2GB model of the iPod shuffle for $69. The popular iPod shuffle is just half a cubic inch in volume, weighs just half an ounce, features an aluminum design with a built-in clip and comes in five colors—silver, blue, green, purple and a (PRODUCT) RED special edition.

"At just $49, the iPod shuffle is the most affordable iPod ever," said Greg Joswiak, Apple's vice president of Worldwide iPod Product Marketing. "The new 2GB model lets music lovers bring even more songs everywhere they go in the impossibly small iPod shuffle."

The iPod is the world's most popular family of digital music players with over 140 million sold. The lineup includes iPod shuffle, the world's most wearable iPod; iPod classic holding up to 40,000 songs*; the incredible iPod nano with video playback and the breakthrough iPod touch with a revolutionary Multi-Touch™ user interface. iPod owners can choose from a vast ecosystem of accessories with over 4,000 products made specifically for the iPod including cases, fitness accessories, speaker systems and iPod connectivity in over 75 percent of US automobiles.

Pricing & Availability

The new 1GB iPod shuffle is available immediately for a suggested retail price of $49 (US) through the Apple Store (www.apple.com), Apple's retail stores and Apple Authorized Resellers. The 2GB iPod shuffle will be available later this month for a suggested retail price of $69 (US) through the Apple Store, Apple's retail stores and Apple Authorized Resellers. iPod shuffle requires a Mac® with a USB 2.0 port, Mac OS X 10.4.8 or later and iTunes 7.4; or a Windows PC with a USB 2.0 port and Windows Vista or Windows XP Home or Professional (Service Pack 2) or later and iTunes 7.4 or later.

*Music capacity is based on four minutes per song and 128-Kbps AAC encoding.

PAGE 4 - ASK THE TECH

Q: I have purchased a new laptop. How do I transfer the songs from the iTunes library on the old laptop into the iTunes library on my new laptop? None of these songs are copy-protected. I created them from my own CDs.

A: If your setup is typical, I would recommend copying the entire iTunes folder that is found under My Music or Music on a PC, or under Music on a Mac. This folder should contain both a subfolder called "iTunes Music" (which contains the actual song files iTunes manages) and one or more files containing the words "iTunes" and "Library," which tell the program about your playlists and other details. If your setup is atypical, you may have to copy music files from other folders and have the copy of iTunes on your new machine re-import them.

Another approach is to use an iPod, if it has all your music and playlists on it. There are small utility programs available on the Web that will copy the contents of an iPod, including playlists, into a fresh version of iTunes on another computer. One that I have used successfully is called Music Rescue and is at www.kennettnet.co.uk. It comes in both Windows and Mac versions. But there are others.

Reminder: if you are discarding or giving away the old computer, be sure to deauthorize it from your iTunes Store account before doing so. Just go to the "Store" menu in iTunes and click on "Deauthorize computer…".

Q: My dad in Venezuela is trying to install Leopard but he forgot his password, is there a way to retrieve or just create a new one?

A. If you've forgotten your OS X password, you can reset it. Here's how-

Resetting the original administrator account password

Follow these steps to reset a password when there is only one administrator account on the computer, or if the original administrator account (of several) needs a password reset. "Original" administrator account refers to the one that was created immediately after installing Mac OS X. If the original administrator password is known, the original administrator user may reset the passwords of other administrator accounts using the steps described above.

1. Start up from a Mac OS X Install CD (one whose version is closest the the version of Mac OS X installed). Hold the C key as the computer starts (to start from the CD).
2. Choose Reset Password from the Installer menu (or Utilities menu in Mac OS X 10.4 Tiger). Tip: If you don't see this menu or menu choice, you're probably not started from the CD yet.
3. Select your Mac OS X hard disk volume.
4. Set the user name of your original administrator account.
   Important: Do not select "System Administrator (root)". This is actually a reference to the root user. Do not confuse it with a normal administrator account.
5. Enter a new password.
6. Click Save.

Q: What is Firefox and how does it differ from Safari?

A: As you have surmised, Firefox is another web browser. It's made by the same folks that brought you Netscape. You can go to the **Firefox web site** and the **Safari** web site and compare the two.

Q: For some reason I cannot send a message from my Mac Pro, The send Icon is there but it looks like it might be disabled. It is grey and when I click on it nothing happens. Is there some way I could have disabled it?

A: It sounds as if your SMTP (Outgoing Mail Server) settings aren't set properly. Go to your Mail program and get into it's preferences. Check the SMTP settings and make sure they are exactly set up the way your ISP suggests.

Q: Are there any known viruses out there that can hit OS X and what is the best virus protection app out for the Mac?

A: As of this date (3/20/08), there are (still) no viruses that effect Mac OS X. However, you can become a carrier, a lá Typhoid Mary, and pass that virus to others you sent it out to. The most common viruses of this type are the Microsoft Word Macro Viruses (of which there are 1000s). You might want to consider getting a copy of Norton Anti-Virus. Not to protect you, but to protect them.

PAGE 5 - OPINION

What Can .Mac Do for You?

Apple's multi-facted .Mac (dot Mac) service is a conundrum, a riddle in and of itself. What is .Mac, exactly? What can it do for me? Is it worth it?

The problem is that .Mac is more than one thing -- it's e-mail, photo and video sharing, Web site hosting, backup, and a synchronization tool all in one. .Mac is a suite of Internet Web services where the sum of its parts creates a value far greater than any individual piece.

Yet, most of the features found in .Mac can also be found for free on other sites, and while not all of the features have direct one-to-one comparisons, they're still free. In that light, how can .Mac's $99.95 annual sticker price compete? Is .Mac something the average user should consider, or is it really geared toward power users?

The answer is that .Mac is neither perfect for average users nor geared for power users, and yet it's good for both kinds of users - as long as the user is a Mac owner. The answer also depends on the person, whether they're willing to spend money on ease-of-use and integration or if they'd rather go elsewhere for dirt-cheap alternatives. There's lots of pieces to .Mac, so a closer look is in order.

.Mac Mail

E-mail accounts are freely available online, with offerings from Yahoo, Google, and Microsoft leading the pack. Why would an average user even bother with paying for the service? Most free e-mail is Web-based, with accessibility driven through a browser, but Google's Gmail service lets you configure your account to work with both IMAP (Internet Message Access Protocol) and POP (Post Office Protocol), which lets you use a standalone e-mail application client like Mac OS X's Mail, Mozilla's Thunderbird or Microsoft Outlook (or, for Mac users, MS Entourage).

The advantage of a standalone e-mail client is efficiency - it helps you process e-mail much faster than Web-based alternatives, and they let you access multiple accounts via a single interface. There's no pesky ads in your e-mail messages, and there are no ads poking up or flashing around your client e-mail app. Still, you can create a Google Gmail account and configure your Mac OS Mail client to access it via POP or IMAP, and you can avoid using a Web browser altogether.

If you have an iPhone, you can use your .Mac e-mail, but you can also do the same with Gmail or Yahoo e-mail. If you're away from your Mac, you can check your .Mac mail through a Web browser interface from most any browser, and the IMAP protocol will keep your Web browsing activities in sync with your mail client. Handy, but it's still not exclusive to .Mac.

Essentially, the only thing that .Mac-based e-mail has going for it is that there's no ads to irritate you or get in your way. However, that's hardly exclusive either. Assuming you can find yourself a domain name that's not already taken, you could buy your own domain and pay a monthly service fee to a Web site and e-mail hosting service at a cost that's competitive with .Mac's sticker price. Buying your own domain name isn't that hard. However, for e-mail newbies, .Mac is about as easy and integrated with Mac OS X as it gets, making it perfect for those who are willing to pay, who want ease of use and flexibility, and who - perhaps most importantly - don't want ads.

Web Site Hosting

.Mac comes with 10 GB of e-mail and file storage - plenty of space for most people, though it's upgradeable to a max of 30 GB with 300 GB of monthly data transfer. The major benefit of .Mac Web hosting is its integration with iWeb, which ships free with any new Mac. iWeb is an application that lets you built Web sites by dragging and dropping photos and text into dozens of sharp-looking Web site templates. iWeb is super easy to use, and once you've created a set of Web pages, you can publish them to your .Mac Web site with a single click.

Apple has also added simple integration that lets you drop in Google Maps, Google AdSense ads, as well as other widgets and HTML (HyperText Markup Language) snippets that can, for instance, embed a YouTube video into your site. iWeb also includes a rudimentary blogging template, and if you do own your own domain name, you can use it with your .Mac site, though the domain must be registered through a third-party registrar.

.Mac's Web site hosting is easily integrated with Mac OS X and Mac applications like iPhoto, but you can also use iWeb to build a Web site that's hosted elsewhere and still easily import photos from iPhoto and create cool slide shows. .Mac is good for basic Web sites and doesn't include the features or support you might need if your site becomes very popular or you have serious commercial interests in online sales.

As for the low-end free side, MySpace and Facebook are free - and easy enough to use that millions of people, kids included, have basically built their own Web pages.

Photo Sharing

.Mac's Web Gallery feature makes it easy to show off your photos and video online.

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PAGE 6 - PRODUCT REVIEWS

MacBook Pro Core 2 Duo - 2.4GHz and 2.5GHz

Penryn processor delivers fleet performance

The new MacBook Pro models Apple released last week might be classified as speed bumps, implying that the pro laptops' new enhancements constitute a minor, albeit noteworthy update.

However, these new MacBook Pros, a pair of 15-inch models and a 17-inch model, represent a fairly significant upgrade—both in terms of technology and performance—over their predecessors, which were released 8 months ago. Debuting Intel's 45 nanometer Penryn processor (a new generation of speedier chips that top the 65-nanometer Merom chips powering the earlier models), the new 2.5GHz MacBook Pros achieved the best scores of any laptop in Macworld's Speedmark 5 benchmark tests.

Despite that accomplishment, some might be disappointed that there was no redesign of the case, and that Apple has made its Front Row remote control, formerly free, a $20 option. The trackpad, which is the same size as in previous models, has been updated to accommodate the multi-touch hand gestures it introduced in the iPhone and featured on the MacBook Air. For example, pinching an image will reduce its size, while swiping will advance you to the next image.

MacBook Pros were designed with the multimedia artist in mind, which means it's the laptop of choice for people who work with audio, video, or large images as well as high-end applications. The new MacBook Pro, as usual, comes in three configurations: a 15-inch 2.4GHz Intel Core 2 Duo model; a 15-inch 2.5GHz model; and a 17-inch 2.5GHz system. And they're the same price—$1,999, $2,499, and $2,799 respectively—as the previous models. You can also purchase a 2.6GHz Core 2 Duo chip as a build-to-order option for the 2.5GHz 15-inch or 17-inch model for an extra $250.

Inside and out

From the outside, the new 15-inch and 17-inch MacBook Pros are identical to their predecessors. All are one inch thick. All come in the same 14.1-inch and 15.4-inch light gray aluminum cases. The 15-inch MacBook Pro weighs 5.4 pounds; the 17-inch model weighs 6.8 pounds.

Both 15-inch models come with LED backlit anti-glare screens with resolutions of 1,440-by-900 pixels. These wide screens immediately illuminate to full brightness and are mercury-free. Glossy displays are available as an option for all models. The 17-inch MacBook Pro, which ships with standard LCD backlighting technology, has a resolution of 1,680-by-1,050 pixels. Apple offers high-resolution LED backlit screens as an option for the 17-inch model. These larger LED backlit displays, which are 1,920-by-1,200 pixels, are mercury-free, arsenic-free, and cost $100 extra. Macworld did not test the 17-inch LED model for this review.

The new MacBook Pros all ship with 2GB of installed RAM (upgradeable to 4GB) and an 8x SuperDrive. All models come with an Nvidia GeForce 8600M GT graphics processor; though the entry-level 2.4GHz model features 256MB of video memory, while the other two configurations offer 512MB. Each model has twice the video RAM as its predecessor. The 15-inch models have two USB 2.0 ports while the 17-inch model has three.

The 2.4GHz system comes with a 200GB hard drive, up from 120GB in the previous analogous model. The two 2.5GHz MacBook Pros offer 250GB of storage, with a 300GB hard drive available as a $75 build-to-order option for the 17-inch laptop. That compares with the 160GB hard drive in the older 15-inch high-end and 17-inch models.

While I'm excited that the MacBook Pro's new trackpad now supports multi-touch hand gestures, I found that because the trackpad is the same size as the previous models, the button often got in the way. That said, the button did not affect the performance of the gestures, which work with the following applications in addition to the Finder: iCal, Safari, Preview, QuickTime Player, DVD Player, iPhoto, Mail, Address Book, and Aperture 2.0.

One thing that has changed from the previous MacBook Pro is the row of function keys at the top of the keyboard. The location of the media, volume, and keyboard illumination keys has been changed, there are new keys to control Expose and Dashboard, and the NumLock key (as well as the rest of the numeric keypad) is now gone. However, the keyboard is nice and springy and has a comfortable, non-spongy feel.

Speed boost

With the new Penryn chips comes a boost to the MacBook Pro's shared L2 cache capacity to 6MB. The two 2.5GHz MacBook Pro models carry 6MB of L2 cache, up from 4MB in the previous models. Interestingly, the 15-inch 2.4GHz MacBook Pro has 3MB of L2 cache, a drop-off from its predecessor. Despite that, the low-end MacBook Pro often performed better than its older siblings in Macworld's battery of benchmark tests. And, while its Speedmark score registered 10 percent faster than last year's low-end model, other comparisons were more dramatic: The new 2.4GHz model was 23 percent faster than that older 2.2GHz system in our Photoshop test suite.

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PAGE 7 - HINTS & TIPS

How Do I Share My Photos Using the Internet?

We all know the drill by now: you want to share the photos you just took from last weekend, but sending out a bunch of emails with just a few photos gets tedious, not to mention that friends and family don't always know what to do with them. What about putting them all on a web page? Is it very difficult or expensive? Let's take a look at a few routes to go to show everyone you want as many photos as you want, easily.

iLife + .Mac
Included with your Mac is a powerful suite of tools to get photos, videos, music and even whole web sites online. Add .Mac and you've got one-button photo sharing.

Just connect your digital camera and manage your photos in iPhoto. Create an album and select "Web Gallery". Friends and Family can easily view with their web browser. If they too have iPhoto, they subscribe to your gallery and even add their own photos. Your photos show up in their iPhoto and theirs in yours. Everyone stays in sync. Could it be easier?

Another option in iPhoto is ".Mac Slides". This will publish a page on your .Mac account with your photos. Send people the URL and they can simply view the photos.

Finally, create an entire web site using your photos in iWeb. Select "Send to iWeb" and publish it to your .Mac account or personal web site.

Web Sites
Flickr is probably the most popular free photo sharing service. Upload photos within your web browser or use a free software download. For around $25 you can download a plug-in which will let you upload photos directly from within iPhoto.

Why use a service like Flickr? These sites specialize in photos and focus on creating a community around them. Friends and Family (anyone for that matter - if you let them) can view your photos, download them, order prints, write comments, share with others and much more.

Other like services include Zooomr, PhotoBucket and Kodak Gallery
Another way to go would be with a social site such as FaceBook or MySpace. The process is easy - create a free profile, invite friends and upload photos. These sites are more about keeping in touch with people and networking. Sharing photos is just one of many things you can do. The potential downside is that your friends and family have to have a profile in order to view your photos.

If your goal is to be able very quickly and easily share photos, the combination of iLife and .Mac is it. But at $99 a year, .Mac is not for everyone.

If you want the most open access to your photos, the photo sharing sites are the way to go. Plus the community aspect is a lot of fun!

If you want something in between, and you've been itching to get on the Web 2.0 bandwagon, social sites are your best choice.

Of course, you don't have to choose just one - you can do them all! Use .Mac for sharing photos of friends and family, photo sharing sites for your artistic side, and social sites for networking.

Tips
I know you are probably thinking email is another option, but if you've ever received an email full of photos from someone, you will spare your loved ones. Plus, you cannot tag, organize or have others make comments (effectively).

Photos directly from your digital camera could be as much as 10 megabytes a piece depending on your settings. If you're not concerned with people being able to order prints of your photos, use a program like iPhoto to reduce the size of the image before you upload it. To do this, select the photo(s), select "Export" from the file menu and choose your quality and size settings.

Take time to tag, assign categories and organize your photos. This will help others search, sort and filter through them (not to mention yourself).

The Path Bar

The Finder's Path Bar is one of Leopard's handiest features. Select View: Show Path Bar, and the path to the current open folder will appear at the bottom of the window. That display is also functional: you can drag an item onto any of the folders shown in the Path Bar to move the item to that folder, and you can double-click on any folder in the path to quickly switch to that folder.

Which Dash?

There are three dash characters in every font: the hyphen, the en-dash, and the em-dash. The hyphen (-) is shortest, the em-dash (—) is the same length as the point size of the letter 'm', and the en-dash (–) is half the length of the em-dash (or the length of an 'n'. However, some fonts, including several installed with Mac OS, ignore these typographic traditions, and their em-dash is quite long.
Generally, use a hyphen (-) for hyphenating words and groups of words; just press the hyphen key.

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PAGE 8 - ONE MORE THING

.Mac, cont.

The integration is slick and functional, works with Aperture, and even lets you add password protection to control access. You can let visitors download high-resolution images or entire albums - or they can add their own photos to your albums from their browser or via e-mail. Whenever new photos are added, .Mac will automatically sync them back to your iPhoto '08 library. A .Mac Web Gallery can also be viewed with iPhones and Apple TVs.

Of course, Flickr can do much of the same as .Mac's Web Gallery, and the basic Flickr is free. High-volume Flickr use, as in unlimited storage, uploads, and bandwidth, as well as ad-free browsing and sharing, can be had for $24.95 for a one-year pro Flickr account.

.Mac Groups
With .Mac, you can also create a group Web site complete with a group e-mail address so that a message sent to the group address is delivered to everyone. The group can share a calendar, have their own Web Gallery album, and the members don't all have to be .Mac members -- they can even be PC users. Ease of use is king with .Mac Groups, but again, there are free alternatives like Ning.com, which lets you create your own social network.

Another alternative is Google Groups, which is free but ad-supported. It can do much of what you can do with .Mac, but you're going to see Google ads.

Easy Sync
With .Mac, you can also keep multiple Macs in sync with one another so that your bookmarks, calendars, contacts, widgets and even your Dock is the same across your Leopard-based Macs. It's quite handy, unless you only have one Mac. Even so, there are other solutions out there that do similar things, like the brand-new upstart site SyncWizard.

SyncWizard not only promises to keep your devices and data in sync, but also gives you an off-site place to store and back up your important files. That brings up .Mac's iDisk.

iDisk in the Cloud
iDisk is like a personal hard disk available online. It's integrated into the Finder in Mac OS X, so like all .Mac features, it's easy to utilize. It's a good way to share files up to 2 GB in size -- simply drag the files from your Mac onto your iDisk's Public folder and the transfer begins. Want password protection so that only a select few can snag the files online? It's easily added.
There are alternatives, of course. For online storage and backup, Mozy offers 2 GB of free and secure online storage, and $4.95 per month will get you unlimited online backups. Is it as easy as iDisk? No way -- but it's free.

Back to My Mac
There is one feature in .Mac that's hard to beat for cost or ease-of-use, and that's Back to My Mac. Just like it sounds, Back to My Mac lets you connect to any remote Leopard-based Mac via .Mac. If you're at work, for example, you can use Back to My Mac to snag a file you want that you left on your home-based Mac.
The only downside is that it only works with Macs running Leopard, and they must be configured for use with the same .Mac account. There are other solutions that accomplish similar sharing tasks and ways to connect two remote Macs, but none are as easy as using .Mac to do it.

The Sum of .Mac's Pieces and Parts
Overall, .Mac is handy but hardly necessary in a world full of alternative Web apps. The easy integration with Mac OS X ensures that it's seamless, easy-to-use, and like the Mac itself, downright elegant. You can get most of the same features from a handful of disparate sites for free - but is it all worth the hassle? Is it worth creating user accounts on the other sites, remembering all your logins and passwords, and spreading your personal data into yet more databases that are owned by yet more companies?

For many, free is best. For more advanced users and professionals, .Mac is good, but pros are just as likely to pay for best-of-breed solutions than a possibly underpowered all-in-one .Mac service. But for whom is .Mac a worthwhile solution?

The answer, of course, is any Mac-loving Apple enthusiast who values stylish ease of use over ad-supported freebies...and can spare a hundred bucks a year.

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Thanks for taking the time to read this month's newsletter.

Hope you enjoyed it. If you have any comments or suggestions for stories (or would even like to write a story ~ hint, hint, hint), please send them to me at: machelpdesk@tx.rr.com

Feel free to share this newsletter with a friend. The newsletter archives are located at: http://www.machelpdesk.com/page6a.html

Y'all come back now, y'hear.

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MacBook Pro, cont.

Even with less L2 cache, the new entry-level MacBook Pro finished just one point under last Fall's build-to-order MacBook Pro, which featured a 2.6GHz Core 2 Duo chip. The new machine was about 8 percent faster in Speedmark and 23 percent faster in the Photoshop suite. Packed with double the video memory, the new 2.5GHz MacBook Pro topped the older build-to-order machine in our Unreal Tournament test by some 21 percent.

If you were among the first to buy Apple's Intel pro laptop a couple of years back, it's interesting to note that the new 15-inch, 2.5GHz MacBook Pro scores reflect roughly a 50-percent boost in both Speedmark 5 tests and our Compressor tests. We also found the new model to be 36 percent faster than the older 2GHz MacBook Pro in our Photoshop suite and 31 percent faster in our Cinema 4D test.

And the low-end 2.4GHz MacBook Pro had a Speedmark score more than twice as fast as the PowerBook G4.

Insofar as non-scientific hands-on experience goes, these new MacBook Pros felt energetic: while startup time was about 25 seconds, launching Photoshop CS3 took about 8 seconds. Some of Apple's built-in apps, like Safari and iCal took a split second to launch.

Battery life

The 15-inch 2.5GHz MacBook Pro's battery life improved significantly, about 21 percent over the previous model, lasting 2 hours and 55 minutes, compared with 2 hours and 25 minutes for the 2.2GHz model. The battery boost for the new 17-inch model is a less-impressive 5 percent: 2 hours and 53 minutes for the 2.5GHz model as opposed to 2 hours and 45 minutes for the previous 2.4GHz model.

Mac Help Desk's buying advice

If you've been waiting to buy a new Apple laptop, or you've been hesitating about upgrading from your G4 PowerBook, wait no longer. The new MacBook Pros are Apple's speediest laptops ever. The higher-end models are loaded with both system and video RAM and better L2 cache capacities, which directly affect performance. It's disappointing to see that the Apple remote, needed to operate Front Row, now costs extra, but on balance, $20 is not a high price to pay for something that many people never use. While the 2.4GHz model is a fine value for the money, the higher-end 15-inch and 17-inch models are outstanding top-of-the-line models for any professional, artistic, scientific, or scholastic application.

Speed Up Your Mac, cont.

General System Tips

- **Clean Out Your Startup Items** -- If you Mac is slow starting up, open your System Preferences and click accounts. Select your username and see what's listed in the startup items. Sometime applications will inject themselves here without asking (or even if they asked, you may not want them anymore). Getting rid of some startup items can speed up your boot time.
- **Clean Up Your Desktop** -- If your desktop is covered with dozens or even hundreds of icons, you may see your performance suffer. Mac OS X treats each desktop icon as its own window, which incurs a small memory hit. For most people this won't be an issue, but if you have hundreds of icons, it might help to move them off to another location.
- **Fonts** -- although they won't produce a huge performance gain, getting rid of any corrupt fonts will make your Mac more stable. Open up Font Book, select all the fonts in the Font list and choose File >> Validate Fonts. Font Book will open a new window with icons to show font's status. If a font is corrupt, select it and click on the Remove Checked button. Font Book can't actually repair corrupt fonts, for that you'll need a commercial utility like FontAgent Pro ($100).

Things that Won't Help No Matter What the 'Pros' in Forums Tell You

- Repairing File Permissions -- Mac users favorite cure-all, which in fact does next to nothing. Unless you're having problems logging in or using certain system files, this won't do anything for you. It certainly won't speed up your Mac.
- Speed up Safari by reducing the "page load delay" -- Lead Safari programmer David Hyatt says, "the preference in question is dead and does absolutely nothing in Safari." Trust him, he created it.
- Updating Prebinding -- Prebinding is updated when apps are launched (and when new ones are installed), there's no need to do it by hand.

Dashs, cont.

Use an en-dash (–) for separating numbers and dates (25–30, May 19–20); press Option/hyphen for an en-dash.

Use an em-dash (—) where uneducated users place double-hyphens; press Shift/Option/ hyphen for an em-dash.